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Agenda items 2 (a), 3 (a), 3 (b), 3 (c) and 3 (d)

PROMOTING AND FACILITATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS FOR ACTION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS AND REVIEWING, MONITORING AND REPORTING ON PROGRESS IN THE MANAGEMENT, CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL TYPES OF FORESTS: PROMOTING AND FACILITATING IMPLEMENTATION

MATTERS LEFT PENDING AND OTHER ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PROGRAMME ELEMENTS OF THE IPF PROCESS: MATTERS LEFT PENDING ON THE NEED FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCES; MATTERS LEFT PENDING ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT; MATTERS LEFT PENDING ON THE TRANSFER OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND TECHNOLOGIES TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT; OTHER ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PROGRAMME ELEMENTS OF THE IPF PROCESS NEEDING FURTHER CLARIFICATION

Letter dated 28 August 1998 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I have the honour to present the paper entitled "Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover".

The Group would be appreciative if you could contribute the paper as an official document of the IFF at this second substantive session, under relevant items, such as: 2 (a), 3 (a), 3 (b), 3 (c) and 3 (d).

(Signed) Arizal EFFENDI

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20 August 1998

Input from the Group of 77 and China to the Second Substantive Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests
Geneva, 24 August-4 September 1998

Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover

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Introduction

Low forest cover accounts for the largest proportion of the Earth's land area which is the habitat and source of livelihood for a large proportion of its population. Low forest cover is due to natural ecological conditions as well as to human activities. Low forest cover is a problem of global dimension and joint action of the international community is needed to respond to the needs and requirements of the developing countries with low forest cover. In this regard, the efforts being undertaken by low and middle income developing LFCCs for the sustainable forest management, afforestation and reforestation should be supported by the international community through, inter alia, the provision of financial, technological and technical resources.

Sustained economic growth, social development and poverty eradication are priorities of LFC developing countries and are essential for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. It must be emphasized that trade and relevant aspects of international economic relations have serious impact on the ability of LFC developing countries to expand and rehabilitate their forest cover.

Low forest cover affects sustainable development through its interrelationships with important economic and social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, shelter, water resources, fuel, fodder, grazing provisions for livestock, and those arising from refugees, migration, displacement of persons and demographic dynamics.

The developing countries with low forest cover are themselves actively engaged in the arid land and forest rehabilitation and have already invested significant amount of resources in these activities which yielded successful results. Recent success stories in several developing countries are prominent examples of contributions that such projects can make to rural development and

This has implications for the production of goods and services at the global level. The scarcity of forest goods and services is a global problem, and the international assistance for the improvement of forest security in terms of meeting the specific needs and requirements of developing countries with low forest cover should be a priority in order to achieve sustainable development at all levels. In this connection, the creation of a conducive environment for the economic and social development as well as the environmental protection in the developing countries with low forest cover is imperative.

A variety of factors contribute to low forest cover, including low original endowment, historical deforestation, and current pressures on land use. But the relative importance of these vary with both country and region within a country and, also, between countries, which require urgent action at national and international levels.

Low forest cover and efforts to expand the forest cover are closely interrelated with other global environmental concerns such as desertification, biological diversity, carbon sequestration. Consequently, actions for addressing low forest cover greatly contribute to international efforts for conserving biological diversity, climate change and combating desertification.

Factors contributing to low forest cover

Almost all developing countries with LFC are located in the arid regions of the world, which are climatically unsuited to support forest cover. In these countries, what forests there are may be restricted to pockets of more favorable growing conditions, such as fog-bound mountain tops or oasis areas with high water tables. Many low forest cover countries (LFCCs) were deforested due to exploitation before the twentieth century; the fate of their forests depended upon a combination of factors related to climate, location, political control and colonialism, as well as on demands for agricultural lands and forest products. Population trends, institutional controls, shipbuilding industry, war and instability are but some of the other factors responsible for the decline of forests in the past.

A few LFCCs once had a substantial endowment of original forest that has been depleted more recently by exploitation and demands for conversion to other land uses. This is particularly true of countries in which the total land area per capita is relatively restricted so that the possibilities of expanding onto non-forested land are reduced.

II. Current trends

Due to their successful efforts, most of the LFCCs record deforestation rates of zero. with an average loss of natural forest of less than 1 per cent. FAO does not record forest clearance in LFCCs whose area of forest cover falls below the minimum threshold. The pressures on remaining forests, however. may be quite intense, especially in countries with low forest cover per capita. Some LFCCs have actually been increasing their forest cover in recent years through reforestation and afforestation programmes. LFCCs have experienced an average net increase of 0.3 per cent in natural and plantation forest area during the 1980-1990 period, compared with a net forest loss worldwide of between 0.1 and 0.2 per cent. Increasingly, the importance of forest management in LFCCs has been recognized; a number of LFCCs have developed national forestry action

programmes and most have ratified the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Combating Desertification, and Climate Change.

Forests provide a wide range of goods and services. In LFCCs, a high proportion of such goods and services derive from other wooded land, farmland or plantation. LFCCs with low forest cover as a percentage of their total land area are generally net importers of timber or timber products. Also, LFCCs may export small quantities of speciality timbers from species. Wood is the major energy source in many countries, including LFCCs. In addition to roundwood and fuelwood, forests and woodlands contribute very significantly to local and national economies through non-wood forest products (NWFPs). These are particularly important to the people living in and around the forests. NWFPs may be highly significant commercial resources in local economies or may be export commodities from LFCCs. In LFCCs, forest can be as important sources of foodstuffs, both for local consumption and for export. They also play important roles in protecting the genetic resources of important crop species.

Wood resources and other forest products are of special importance to the national economy and livelihood of a large proportion of the population in LFCCs. Based on the specificities of forests in LFCCs, the dependence of communities and forest dwellers include a variety of forests' goods and services including fuelwood and charcoal, honey, gum, food, medicine, leaves, grazing provisions for livestock, and timber. Important uses of trees include fuelwood, hut construction, livestock enclosures and fodder. The products and services provided by trees to other sectors of LFCCs' economies, such as water-resource maintenance, edible products, and industry are especially important.

Unique forests

Unique types of forests are an extremely important part of natural heritage which deserve particular attention of the international community. Unique forest ecosystems are especially important for biodiversity conservation. They may be areas with significant numbers of unique (that is endemic) species, or they may be areas with unique communities or associations of non-endemic species. Unique types of forests not only contribute to the national but also to the global biological diversity. Species richness and endemism of unique forests is also significant. Climate and isolation are two of the factors determining biodiversity in LFCCs. Furthermore, the unique types of forests are vital for the economic, social and cultural life of dependent communities, specially the forest dwellers, in the developing LFCCs.

Protected areas

The development of comprehensive protected areas networks in LFCCs is an important step towards the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, as well as of natural and associated cultural resources. This requires legal or other effective means supported by, inter alia, adequate financial resources, technology, know how, and necessary data. The purposes for which sites are managed differ greatly, and may range from scientific research and tourism and recreation to the sustainable use of resources from natural ecosystems.

III. Information requirements

The principal issue under consideration for LFCCs is the availability of forest-derived goods and services per person, nationally and in global terms. The information on the scarcity of such goods and services is needed at the global level and its availability at the national and local levels is important as a basis for decision-making. For that purpose, the strengthening of the information systems, as well as the creation of new systems, where necessary, must be assisted and supported. National monitoring programmes are increasingly being implemented in LFCCs to improve the accuracy of data and the frequency with which they are recorded. In this connection, information gathered needs to be matched to the requirements for policy making and other information purposes.

In many cases, new information is needed for developing policies that are appropriate to the management of scarce forest resources, analyzing the marketers for forest goods and services, determining institutional responsibilities and roles, and planning forest management.

IV. Approaches and policy options

The security of supply of forest goods and services is a matter of particular importance in different ways at local, national and global levels. Mechanisms to ensure the long-term security of supply will require appropriate policies, institutions, information flows, as well as the necessary resources. National Action Programmes constitute a good basis for addressing the needs and requirements of the developing countries with low forest cover. Elaboration of National Programme of Action which contains, among other elements, information exchange, capacity building, adaptive approaches, and identifying priorities. The process, considering the diversity of situations among LFCCs, may accommodates possible options in order to ensure the long-term economic development and securing forest goods and services in developing LFCCs.

Policies and activities for rehabilitation and the restoration of forests in developing LFCCs create great opportunities for sustainable development in all economic, social and environmental dimensions. These opportunities include, inter alia, diversification of national economy, food security, rural development, creation of employment, eradication of poverty, particularly women's poverty, empowerment of women, preservation of unique types of forests, carbon sequestration, preservation of wildlife habitat, and reversing the trend towards soil erosion, land degradation, desertification process, loss of biodiversity, degradation of existing forests, degradation of forest watershed, preservation of water quality and quantity, water resource pollution, etc... In this regard, in addition to all other forms of support, the international instruments, such as the conventions on climate change, biodiversity and particularly, the convention to combat desertification, should play a great role in both establishing national action plans and coordinating international support for undertaking such actions. Water resource is also a prerequisite for the expansion of forest cover in the developing LFCCs.

Civil society, including , local communities, NGOs and private sector also have an important role to play in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, including the unique types of forests. Mechanisms for the involvement of all stakeholders will facilitate the process of choosing and implementing policies for reforestation and afforestation.

V. Summary of IPF Report on low forest cover

The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) discussed the special needs and requirements of LFCCs as one of the programme elements. The IPF pointed out that "the restricted area of forests in countries with low forest cover results in reduced capacity for the production of timber and for the provision of goods and services, including the protection of watersheds, the supply of fuelwood, the maintenance of biological diversity and endemic species, and recreation and amenity." "National protective measures and international support" for many of the forest types in those countries which are "distinctive or even rare" was also emphasized. The Panel recognized the seriousness of problems faced by LFCCs in satisfying their needs for forest goods and services, and that, "owing to economic factors and circumstances, the impact of the problem in developing countries is much more severe than in developed countries." Furthermore, the Panel recognized that "the needs of low-income and middle-income countries with low forest cover are likely to differ from those of high-income countries, and consequently, different sets of action to address those needs will apply."

While emphasizing the need for the actions under this programme element with actions under CBD, UNFCCC, and CCD, the Panel noted that national forest programmes (NFPs) provide a good vehicle for addressing the needs and requirements of LFC. Furthermore, the necessity of additional information as a basis for national forest programmes was highlighted.

The importance of international cooperation, particularly through financial and technical assistance and the transfer of environmentally sound technology, as well as through the establishment of appropriate research and information networks, private investments, ODA and for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests in LFCCs, was emphasized.

The IPF also made a number of proposals for action. In this regard, the Panel "called upon FAO, in consultation with relevant organizations and countries, as appropriate, to develop a workable and precise definition of low forest cover." The Panel urged the countries with low forest cover to develop national forest programmes; to plan and manage forest plantations, where appropriate, to enhance production and provision of goods and services; to involve indigenous people, local communities, forest dwellers and forest owners; to fully analyze and take into account the related social, economic and environmental implications and costs and benefits, when considering non-wood substitutes or imports of forest products; to establish and expand networks of protected areas, buffer zones and ecological corridors; to embark on capacity-building programmes at various levels; to take full advantage of the wealth of traditional knowledge; and, to develop adequate research and information systems.

The Panel also urged the developed countries to assist developing LFCCs to expand their forest cover through "the provision of financial resources and transfer of appropriate technology, as well as through the exchange of information and access to technical know-how and knowledge." Furthermore, countries and international organizations are urged to improve the efficiency of and procedures for international cooperation to support the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests in developing countries with low forest cover and the donor countries and multilateral and international organizations to facilitate and assist these countries in

building capacity for data gathering and analysis so as to enable them to monitor their forest resources.

VI. Proposals for action

Request the IFF to identify necessary actions and arrangements to address, as a matter of priority , the specific needs and requirements of developing countries with low forest cover, recognizing that forest rehabilitation and restoration efforts in those countries greatly contribute to achieving the objectives of the existing environmental conventions and agreements including the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and other related environmental conventions. Furthermore, the protection and conservation of unique types of forests as a valuable environmental heritage needs special care;

Request also the Secretariat of IFF to prepare a report on the implementation of the outcome of IPF on the needs and requirements of developing countries with low forest cover, together with supplementary action-oriented and practical recommendations on this issue and to submit to the third session of IFF;

Considering the fact that developing LFCCs often depend, to a large extent, on other countries to satisfy their needs for forest goods and services, including for timber, wood and fibre, IFF should also discuss and further elaborate this extremely important element when addressing the relevant issues including, inter alia, trade and development. In this regard, the serious impact of trade and relevant aspects of international economic relations on the efforts of LFC developing countries to expand and rehabilitate their forest cover must be discussed. Furthermore, there is a need, among others, to identify which forest products (wood and non-wood, commercial and non-commercial) and forest services are scarce in the forested-poor countries and how to improve and sustain their supply at national and global terms;

Further requests the Secretariat of IFF to hold, with the assistance of concerned and interested member states and international experts, seminars, briefings and presentations on the particular conditions of the developing LFCCs;

Calls upon FAO to expedite the process of developing a comprehensive definition for low forest cover while taking fully into account the particular needs and requirements of developing LFCCs;

Calls upon the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to adopt, within its four focal areas of activity, particular attention to the projects on the rehabilitation and restoration of forests in the developing countries with low forest cover;

Bearing in mind the contribution of forest programmes in the developing LFCCs to all environmental conventions, calls upon those conventions to take necessary coordination measures for incorporating the special needs and requirements of developing LFCCs in their policies and programmes;

Urges the developed countries, in fulfilling their obligations in accordance with the existing agreements, to give priority to the special needs of developing LFCCs. In this context, also urges the developed countries, including those with low forest cover but with limited land and unsuitable climatic conditions, to fulfil their commitments contained in the final outcome of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests in terms of the provision of new and additional financial resources and transfer of technology, as well as the exchange of information and access to technical know-how and knowledge. In this direction, urges the developed countries to reverse the trend towards declining ODA both in percentage and absolute terms;

Urges the developed countries and international organizations, including the international financial institutions, to improve the efficiency of and procedures for international cooperation to support, by all existing and other possible means, including the provision of loan and investment guarantees, matching funds and other forms of support, as well as the promotion of private sector investments, the policies and programmes of the developing countries with low forest cover for afforestation, reforestation and combating deforestation and desertification, as well as the conservation of unique types of forests;

Urges the donor countries and multilateral and international organizations to assist the developing LFCCs in strengthening capacities to enable them to improve their institutional frameworks, as well as their scientific and technical capabilities, information collection and analysis, and research and development for the purpose of reforestation and afforestation in accordance with their national priorities and needs;

Requests the developing countries with LFC to adopt reforestation and afforestation as a priority in their efforts for sustainable development of their forests; to make efforts to mobilize their national financial resources; to promote regional cooperation, in a spirit of solidarity and partnership, in programmes and activities for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, with due attention to the unique types of forests; undertake efforts to make their existing national institutions more effective and efficient; to promote south-south cooperation, inter alia, for the exchange of information on appropriate technology, knowledge, know-how and practices between and among them; to develop comprehensive national strategies for sustainable forest management; and, to involve all stakeholders;

Calls upon the United Nations system, including funds and programmes, Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as all other relevant organizations and bodies to address, in their relevant policies and programmes, the needs and requirements of developing countries with low forest cover, bearing in mind that low forest cover is an economic, social and environmental problem and that also it is interlinked and interrelated with other environmental problems of global dimension facing the international and national communities.